DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 489 TM 014 399

AUTHOR Vergiels, John M.; Snow, Mary B.
TITLE A Survey of Social Studies Teachers in Nevada.
INSTITUTION Nevada State Dept. of Education, Carson City. Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch.
PUB DATE Aug 88
NOTE 55p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum; Professional Development; Profiles; Questionnaires; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Teachers; *Social Studies; Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Qualifications; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS *Nevada; *Teacher Surveys

ABSTRACT

Data on the type and quality of preparation, types of licenses and endorsements held, and current teaching situation of teachers have not regularly been collected in Nevada. This study represents an effort to develop a profile of social studies teachers in Nevada. All 586 secondary school social studies teachers in Nevada received the study questionnaire, developed by a panel of experienced teachers and coordinators. The final overall response rate was 80% (N=469). Most social studies teachers (67%) received their training out-of-state; 65% held at least one major in social studies and 57% had master's degrees, although three-quarters of these were in areas other than social studies. Most social studies teachers (76%) were located in urban schools, and 49% worked in senior high schools. Almost half (48%) taught five or more classes, but 25% taught only one or two social studies classes. Class sizes of over 30 were taught by 45% of the teachers. Almost 25% of these teachers had never participated in any social studies-related professional activities. Nineteen percent had engaged in only one such activity. The diverse backgrounds and comparative lack of participation in professional activities suggest that the Nevada State Department of Education should provide more coordinated services for social studies teacher development. Appendix A contains the survey questionnaire, and appendix B provides graphs of the types of classes taught. Six tables containing data from the survey and 12 figures are provided. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314489

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

KEVIN CROWE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A SURVEY OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN NEVADA

by

Dr. John M. Vergiels

and

Dr. Mary B. Snow

Nevada Department of Education

EUGENE T. PASLOV
Superintendent of Public Instruction

RICHARD H. WHITE
Deputy Superintendent

MARCIA R. REARDON
Deputy Superintendent

[redacted]

Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch
KEVIN CROWE, *Director*

Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nevada 89710

TM014399

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A SURVEY OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN NEVADA

by

Dr. John M. Vergiels

and

Dr. Mary B. Snow

August 1988

MAJOR FINDINGS

-Approximately 67% of Nevada's social studies teachers received their training out-of-state.

-65% of the social studies teachers hold at least one major in social studies; 9% hold neither a major nor a minor.

-57% of the respondents hold master's degrees; however, almost three-fourths of these degrees are in areas other than social studies.

-76% of Nevada's social studies teachers are located in the urban school districts.

-49% of the social studies teachers work in senior high schools.

-48% of the social studies teachers teach five or more social studies classes; 25% teach only one or two social studies classes.

-27% of the respondents were teaching one or more small social studies classes (less than 20); 45% were teaching one or more large social studies classes (over 30).

-65% of Nevada's social studies teachers have taught eleven or more years; 40% have taught seventeen years or more.

-65% of the social studies teachers are male; 35% are female.

-Almost 25% of Nevada's social studies teachers have never participated in any social studies related professional activities; 19% had engaged in only one such activity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Methodology.....1

Current Teaching Situation.....2

Educational Background.....7

Licensure Status.....15

Professional Career.....19

Personal Background Information.....23

A Comparison of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts.....26

Summary and Conclusions.....32

Suggested Recommendations.....34

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Quality by Type of Preparation	17
2	Percent Ever Involved in Each Professional Activity	22
3	Description of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts	27
4	Teaching Situations of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts	28
5	Preparation of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts	30
6	Professional Activities of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts	31

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Types of Schools in Which Social Studies Teachers are Located	3
2	Percent of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban Districts	5
3	Number of Social Studies Classes Being Taught by Respondents	6
4	Where Social Studies Teachers Graduated from College	8
5	Number of Social Studies Teachers with Majors in Social Studies	10
6	Number of Different Social Studies Areas in Which Teachers Have Had Coursework	13
7	Type of Preparation for First Teaching Certificate/License	14
8	Perception of the Quality of Teacher Preparation Program	16
9	Number of Years of Full-time Teaching Experience	20
10	Types of Credit for Professional Development	21
11	Number of Professional Activities Ever Engaged in by Social Studies Teachers	24
12	Ages of Social Studies Teachers	25

APPENDICES

A The Questionnaire

B Types of Social Studies Classes Taught

Figure B-1 Sizes of Social Studies Classes
Figure B-2 Ability Levels of Social Studies Classes

A Survey of Social Studies Teachers in Nevada

Very little is known about the teaching force in Nevada. Data on type and quality of preparation, types of licenses/endorsements held, and current teaching situation are not regularly collected. Therefore, when it was suggested that a survey be conducted which would provide such a profile of Nevada social studies teachers, the Department agreed that this would be a worthwhile endeavor. The Department has also made tentative plans to conduct surveys of other teacher groups in the future and thus to develop a database which will provide a valid description of the current status of teachers and teaching in Nevada. It was anticipated that this study would result in data which could be used by the universities to examine their programs for prospective social studies teachers and to identify the professional development needs of current social studies teachers. It was also expected that this survey could provide information to the Department and the Universities regarding the licensing experiences of this particular subgroup of teachers and facilitate a review of licensing regulations and procedures.

Methodology

Data were collected by means of mailed questionnaires. Because of the small number in the universe (586), it was decided to include all secondary level social studies teachers in the survey. The operational definition of social studies teachers was: persons teaching one or more social studies classes in a departmentalized secondary public or private school. A computer listing of all public school social studies teachers was obtained from the Department of Data Processing. The list of private school social studies personnel was compiled from Department files and by telephone contacts with these schools.

Near the beginning of the project, a Social Studies Advisory Panel, consisting of seven highly recommended and experienced social studies teachers and coordinators, was formed. The panel met in March of 1987 to review the questionnaire, to discuss the purposes, goals and uses of the study, and to provide suggestions for strategies to obtain a high response. Some panel members also offered to help obtain sites for pre-testing of the instrument within their districts.

Following the meeting of the Social Studies Advisory Panel, the questionnaire was revised, pre-tested in three sites, and then underwent a final revision. Panel members were contacted by mail and by phone for additional input.

Based on the strong recommendation of the advisory panel, data collection was scheduled for August 1987, just before the opening of schools. These dates varied according to the different school district calendars.

District superintendents were informed about the survey during their regular April meeting. Their cooperation was sought in sharing this information with their principals and social studies teachers. In addition, letters were sent to all presidents of the local classroom teacher associations and the president of the Nevada State Education Association asking for their support of the project. In early August, letters describing the survey procedures were sent to all secondary principals in the state and the social studies department chairpersons in the Clark and Washoe Districts. All district offices were contacted to determine any changes in social studies teachers from the previous year.

From the middle to the end of August, depending upon the districts' or private schools' opening school dates, questionnaires, along with cover letters and return envelopes, were mailed to all social studies teachers in the state (586). In Clark and Washoe, social studies department chairpersons were asked to include the questionnaire on the agenda for their departmental meetings.

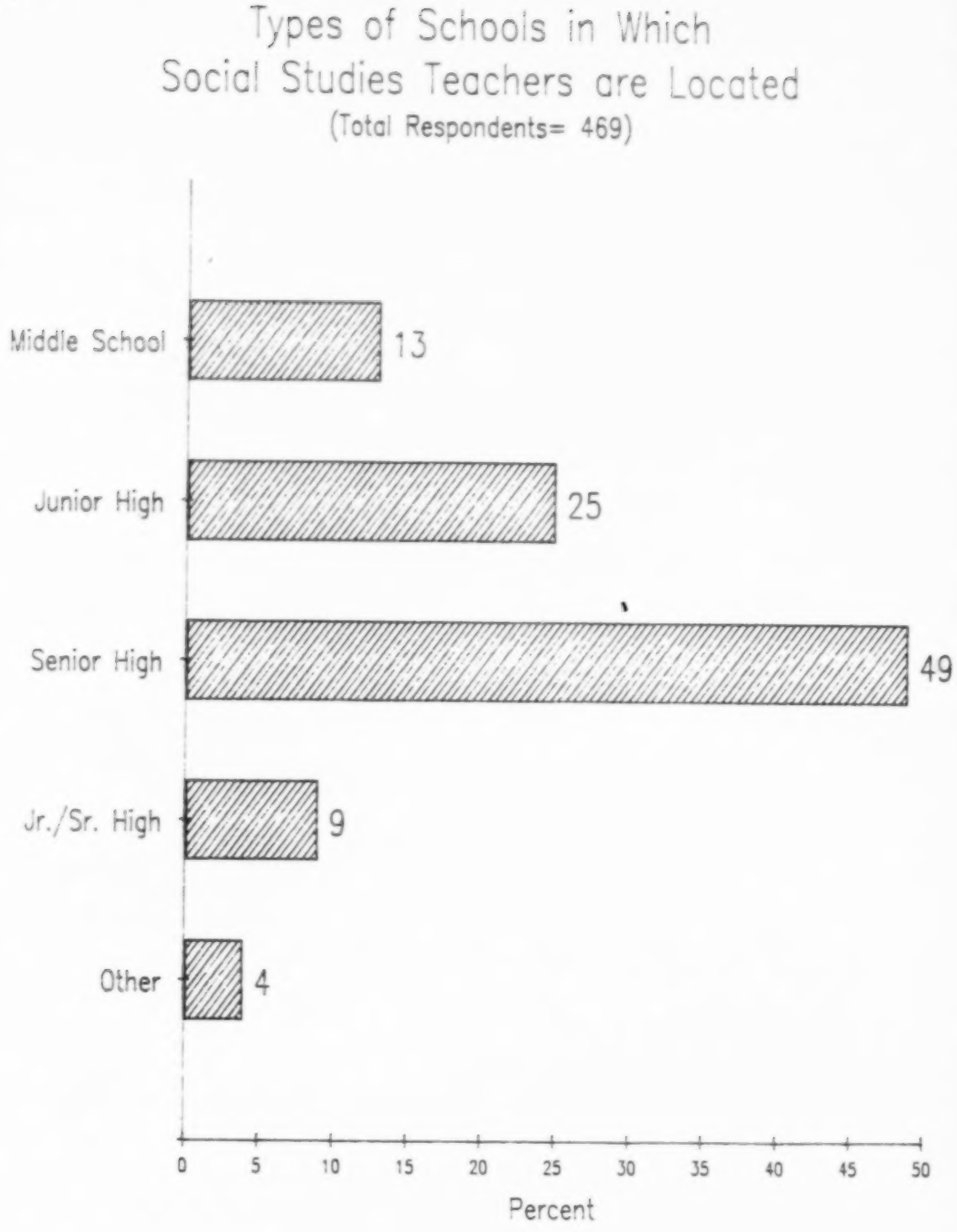
In September a second wave of questionnaires was sent to those who had not yet responded. The final overall response rate was 80%. The response rate for the rural counties was 79%; for Clark, 79%; for Washoe, 87%; and for the private schools, 57%. Because of the high response rate, it is reasonable to assume that the survey responses are indeed representative of the entire group of social studies teachers in Nevada.

Current Teaching Situation

Characteristics of Schools

Close to one-half of the social studies teachers are located in senior high schools and one-fourth are in junior high schools. The remaining teachers are located in middle schools (13%), combined junior/senior high schools (9%), and other schools (4%). "Other" refers to alternative schools, adult high schools, prison schools, court schools, and K-9 or K-12 schools. (Figure 1.)

Figure 1


Types of Schools in Which
Social Studies Teachers are Located
(Total Respondents= 469)
Middle School
13
Junior High
25
Senior High
49
Jr./Sr. High
9
Other
4
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
Percent

More than three-fourths of the 469 social studies teachers responding teach in the urban districts of Carson City, Clark, and Washoe. Only 110 or less than one-fourth teach in the remaining 13 rural districts.* (Figure 2.) However, a small number (11%) of the urban district teachers described their schools as rural schools within urban districts. When asked about the socio-economic background of students in their schools, most of the social studies teachers described the students as predominantly middle class (41%) or from a mix of different socio-economic backgrounds (30%). Only 18% identified their students as being from low socio-economic families and only 8% as predominantly from high socio-economic families.

Description of Social Studies Classes Taught

The number of social studies classes being taught by our respondents varied widely from one to seven with the highest percent being the 33% who teach five classes. (See Figure 3.)

The social studies subjects being taught by the greatest numbers of teachers are the following:

U.S. History	172
World History	130
U.S. Government	129
Social Studies	92
Geography	79
Nevada History	38
Psychology	25
Current Events	15
Economics	11

What other subjects are social studies teachers teaching? Thirty different subjects were listed by respondents. Those most frequently mentioned were:

English	37
Math	35
Physical Ed.	23
Spanish	19
Science	18
Reading	17
Health	16
Computer	12
Journalism	10
German	9

*Esmeralda County School District is not included in the survey because it contains no secondary schools.

Figure 2

Percent of Social Studies Teachers
in Rural and Urban Districts
(Total Respondents= 469)

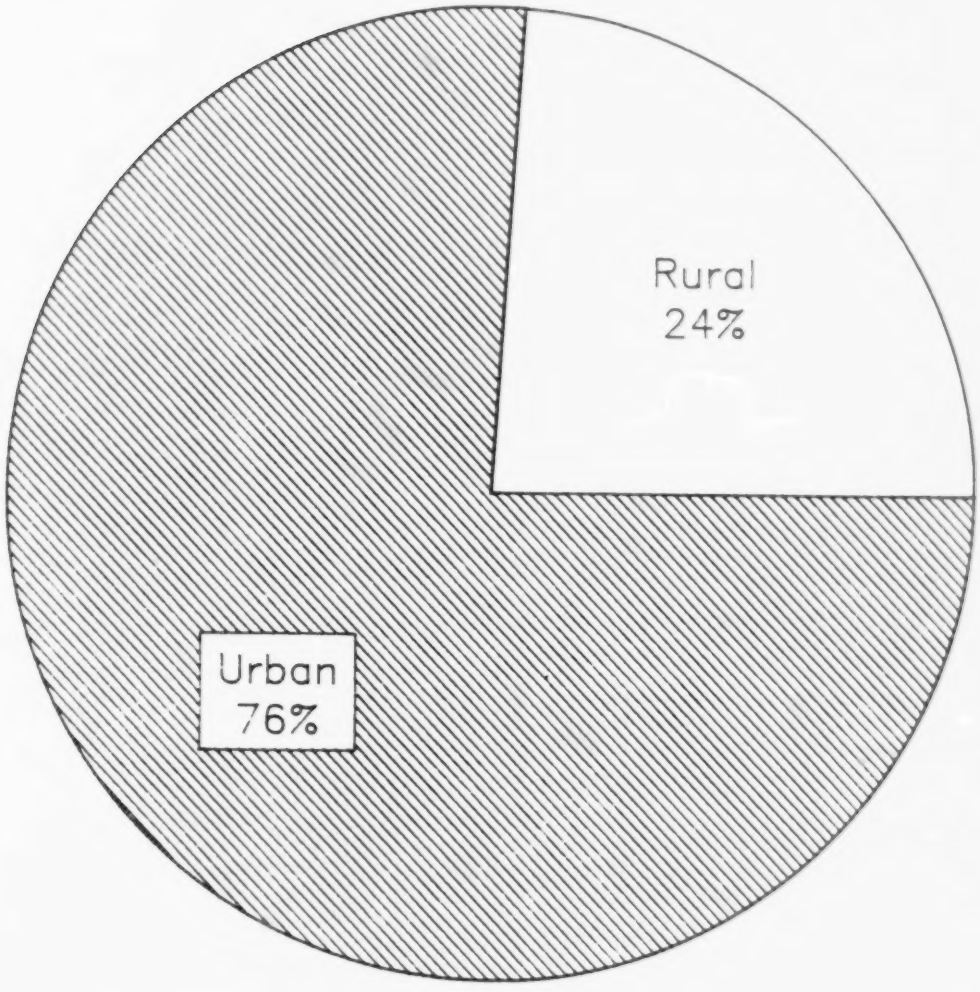
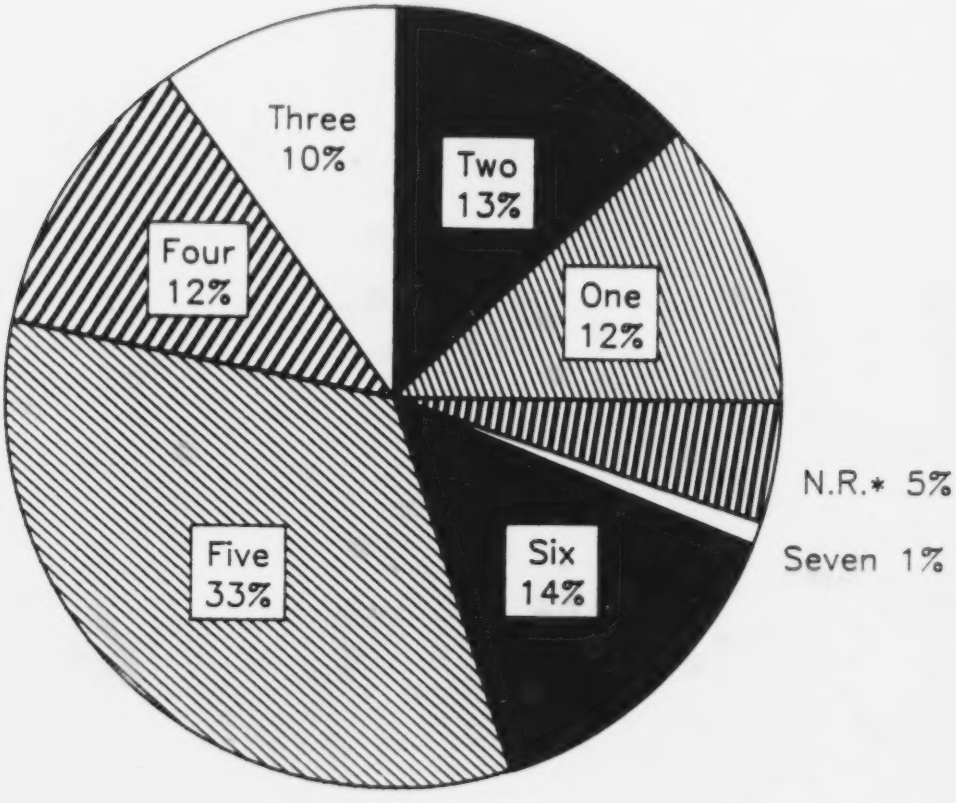


Figure 3

Number of Social Studies Classes Being Taught by Respondents
(Total Respondents= 469)



* N.R.= No Response

The teachers were asked about the sizes of their social studies classes and the ability levels of these classes. Only 27% of the teachers had one or more small (less than 20) classes. Forty-five percent had one or more large (over 30) classes. Only 19% of the teachers said they taught one or more below average ability classes and only 23% taught one or more above average ability level classes. Social studies classes taught were most commonly described as average ability or mixed ability level classes. (See Appendix B-1 and B-2 for additional figures.)

Formal Preparation and Effectiveness in Current Situation

Respondents were asked, "Were there any particular experiences or courses in your formal preparation which you feel have helped you be an effective social studies teacher in your current situation?"

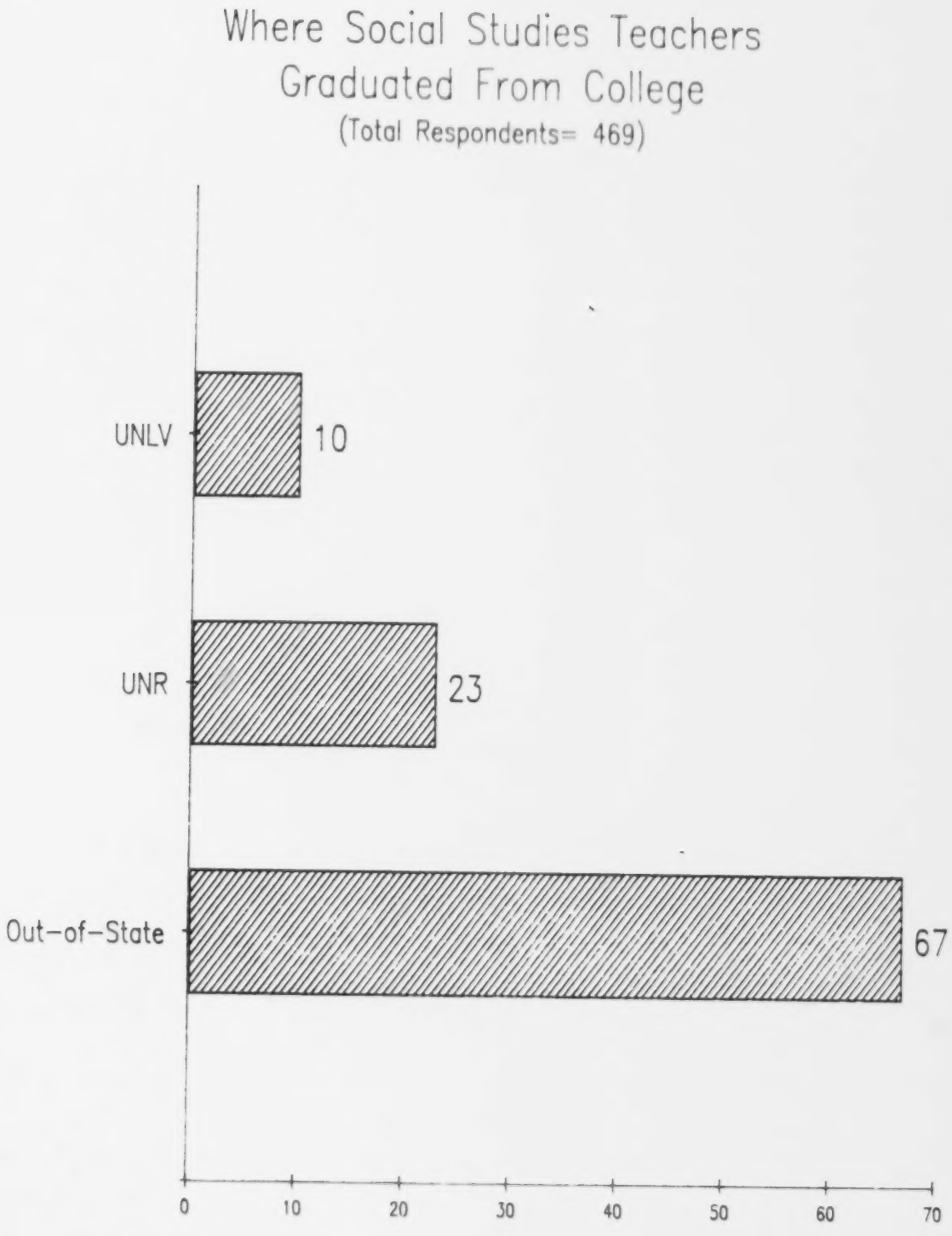
Sixty-five percent (305) replied "Yes." In the explanations of these responses, 151 named courses in specific social studies areas: history, geography, political science, social studies core, courses in major, etc. An additional 57 made specific mention of student teaching or pre-student teaching experiences. Twenty-nine named classes with particularly good instructors, twenty-nine indicated specific methods courses, and eight said "a good broad academic background." Twenty-one respondents believed "travel/experiences in other cultures" had helped them and ten named "other teaching/administrative experiences in the schools."

Educational Background

As reflected in Figure 4, the great majority (67%) of Nevada's social studies teachers received their undergraduate training in out-of-state schools. Only 23% had graduated from the University of Nevada-Reno and only 10% from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

As revealed in the open-ended responses, those who graduated from schools outside of Nevada attended 167 different colleges or universities in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and the Mariana Islands.

Figure 4


Where Social Studies Teachers
Graduated From College
(Total Respondents= 469)
UNLV
10
UNR
23
Out-of-State
67
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70

States (outside of Nevada) where the highest numbers of social studies teachers received their training were:

California	64
Utah	47
Arizona	34
Idaho	19
Texas	13
Washington	11
South Dakota	11
Colorado	8
Indiana	8
Michigan	8

Out-of-state schools from which the highest numbers of Nevada social studies teachers received training were the following:

Brigham Young University	28
Northern Arizona University	20
Arizona State University	14
Southern Utah State	12
Idaho State University	11
UCLA	10
Boise State University	7
Indiana State University	6
California State, Hayward	5
San Diego State	5

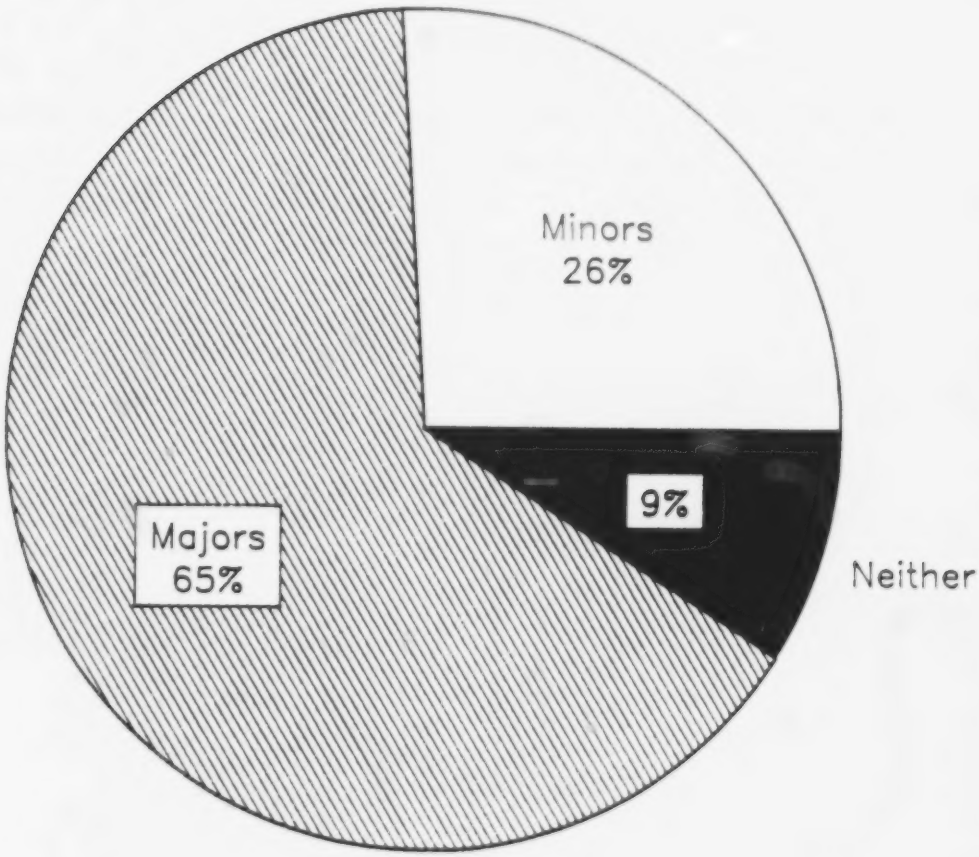
Majors in Social Studies

As seen in Figure 5, 65% of Nevada's social studies teachers completed one or more majors in social studies areas during their undergraduate training. These include 40% with one major, 19% with a major and a minor in social studies areas, and 6% with double majors in social studies. Twenty-six percent of the teachers had completed only a minor in a social studies area and 9% had completed neither a social studies major nor a minor.

Figure 5

Social Studies Teachers with Majors in Social Studies, with Minors Only, and with Neither Majors or Minors

(Total Respondents= 469)



The social studies teachers without majors in social studies were asked to write the names of their majors or areas of concentration. The results are listed in rank order.

Physical Education, Health, Recreation. . .	53
English, Journalism, Communications, Speech/Drama, Language Arts	40
Elementary Education	27
Business Education, Business Administration, Accounting	13
General Science, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Zoology	11
Music	8
Foreign Languages	8
Special Education	4
Art	3
Math	2
Pre-Law	2
Criminal Justice	1
Agriculture	1
Home Economics	1
Speech Therapy	1
Philosophy	1

Other Training Specifically in Social Studies

When respondents were asked whether they had ever taken a college or university course in methods of teaching one of the social studies areas, 332 or 71% replied "Yes." Within this group, 54% had taken the course(s) at the undergraduate level, 18% at the graduate level and 27% at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Another question inquired "Did you teach one or more social studies classes as part of your supervised student teaching?" In this case "Yes" was checked by 328 or 70% of the teachers.

In response to whether they had completed any graduate level coursework in social studies, 323 or 69% of the respondents said "Yes." Number of graduate hours in social studies earned by these persons ranged from three to over thirty-six.

Finally, a list of social studies areas was provided on the questionnaire. These included: Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Geography, U.S. History (including Nevada History), World History (including all World Studies e.g. Russian or French History), Ethnic Studies, and Other (to be specified). Respondents were asked to check each area in which they had completed at least 3 semester hours. Figure 6 shows that 42% had completed courses in 7 or 8 of these social studies areas, and 34% had credits in 5 or 6 of these areas. The extremes were less well represented. Only 14% had studied 9 or 10 different social studies areas, only 8% had studied as few as 3 or 4 areas, and 1% as few as 1 or 2 areas.

Types of Degrees Held

All of the social studies teachers hold bachelor's degrees, 57% hold master's degrees, 7% have earned specialist's degrees, and less than 1% have doctoral degrees.

Among those 267 teachers with master's degrees, only 27% had obtained these in a social studies area. Eighteen non-social studies areas were represented among these master's degrees. Those with the highest representation were administration and education.

Those with graduate degrees were asked whether they had encountered any difficulty in obtaining the program desired. Only 13% of the 301 teachers with graduate degrees replied "Yes." Most of these persons indicated that either the courses they wanted were not available at all or that they were not offered at times they could attend, that is, in the evening or in summer. More specifically, a number of these teachers indicated that they would have preferred a master's degree in a social studies area, but did not pursue this, as it would have necessitated taking a year's leave from teaching.

Type and Quality of Teacher Preparation Program

As reflected in Figure 7, 60% of the social studies teachers completed a teacher preparation program as part of a bachelor's degree awarded from a college or school of education. However, 24% completed most or all of the coursework required for licensure after obtaining a bachelor's degree. Only 12% completed a teacher preparation program as part of a bachelor's degree awarded from a college or school other than education. Three percent checked "other." Some of these persons explained that their first teaching license was a provisional one; others said they had been enrolled in five-year teacher education programs.

Figure 6

Number of Different Social Studies Areas In Which Teachers Have Had Coursework

(Total Respondents= 469)

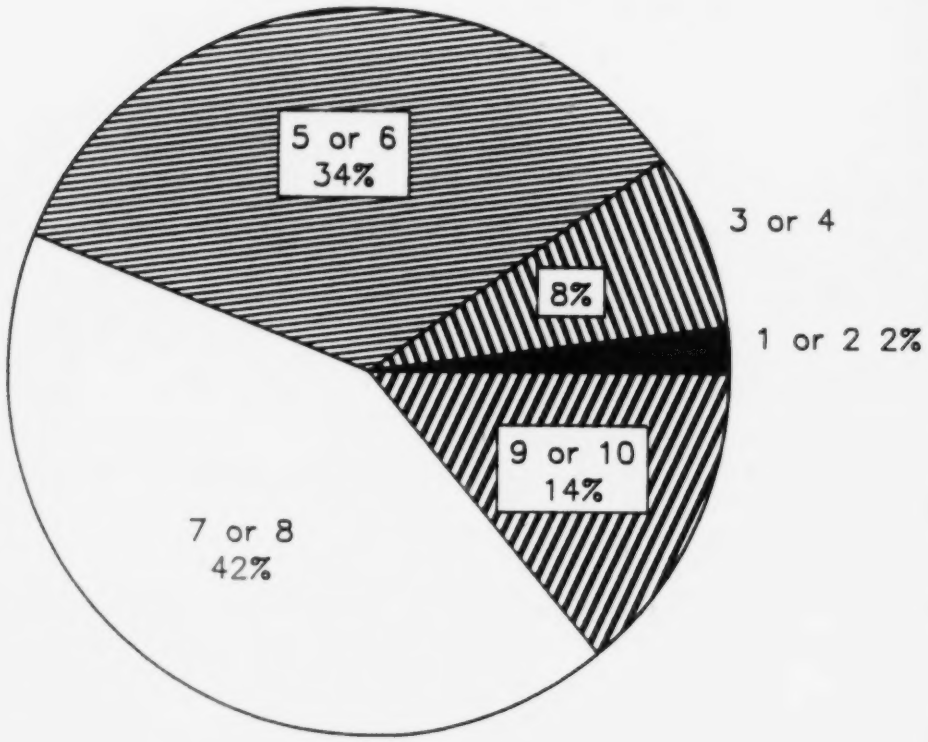
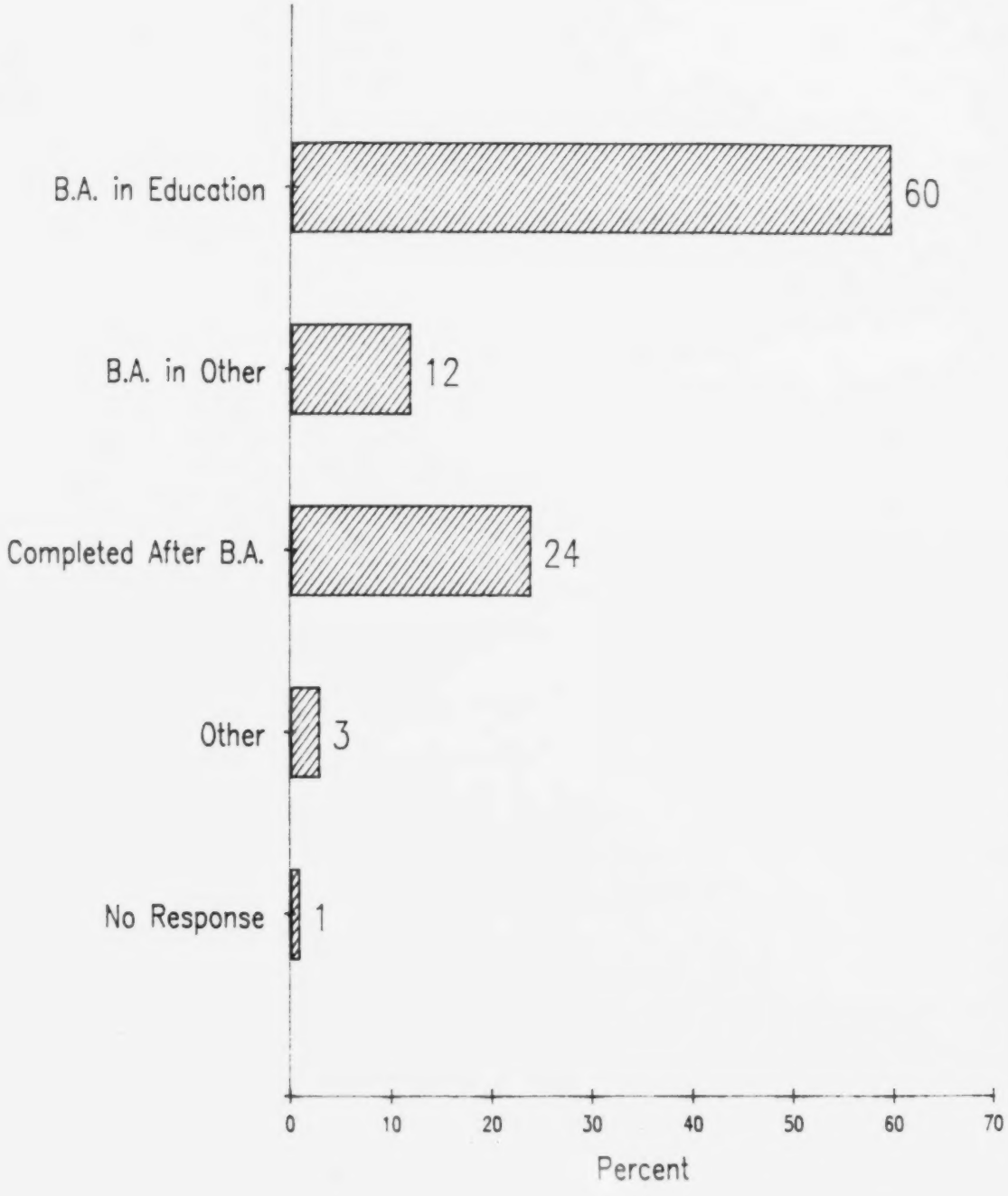


Figure 7

Type of Preparation for First Teaching Certificate

(Total Respondents= 469)



Respondents were then asked to rate the quality of their teacher preparation programs. Slightly over 50% rated their programs as "excellent" or "good"; 23% rated them as "adequate"; and 24%, as "mediocre" or "poor." (See Figure 8.) Comments regarding the quality of their preparation programs were invited. The following areas were most frequently mentioned in the responses:

1) The most important part of preparation was the student teaching and other classroom experience. There should be more of these types of experiences. The role of the supervisory/master teacher is crucial.

2) There should be a greater concentration on subject matter courses. These were more helpful than education/methods courses.

3) Courses tended to be too theoretical, not practical or relevant to the real classroom situation.

4) Teaching skills are best learned on the job, from experience. (Several persons made special note of the help/training they received during their first year of teaching through PDC or Links programs.)

Table 1 shows the type of teacher preparation program by perceived quality. ("Other" types of teacher preparation programs are not included due to the very small numbers involved.) It is clear that completion of a teacher preparation program in a school or college of education received a higher percent of "excellent" or "good" ratings than did completion of such a program in another college or completion of teaching requirements after earning a bachelor's degree.

Licensure Status

Social studies teachers in Nevada hold the following types of Nevada licenses:

Elementary . .	74 (16%)
Secondary . . .	425 (91%)
Special	134 (29%)
Provisional . .	21 (4%)

Figure 8

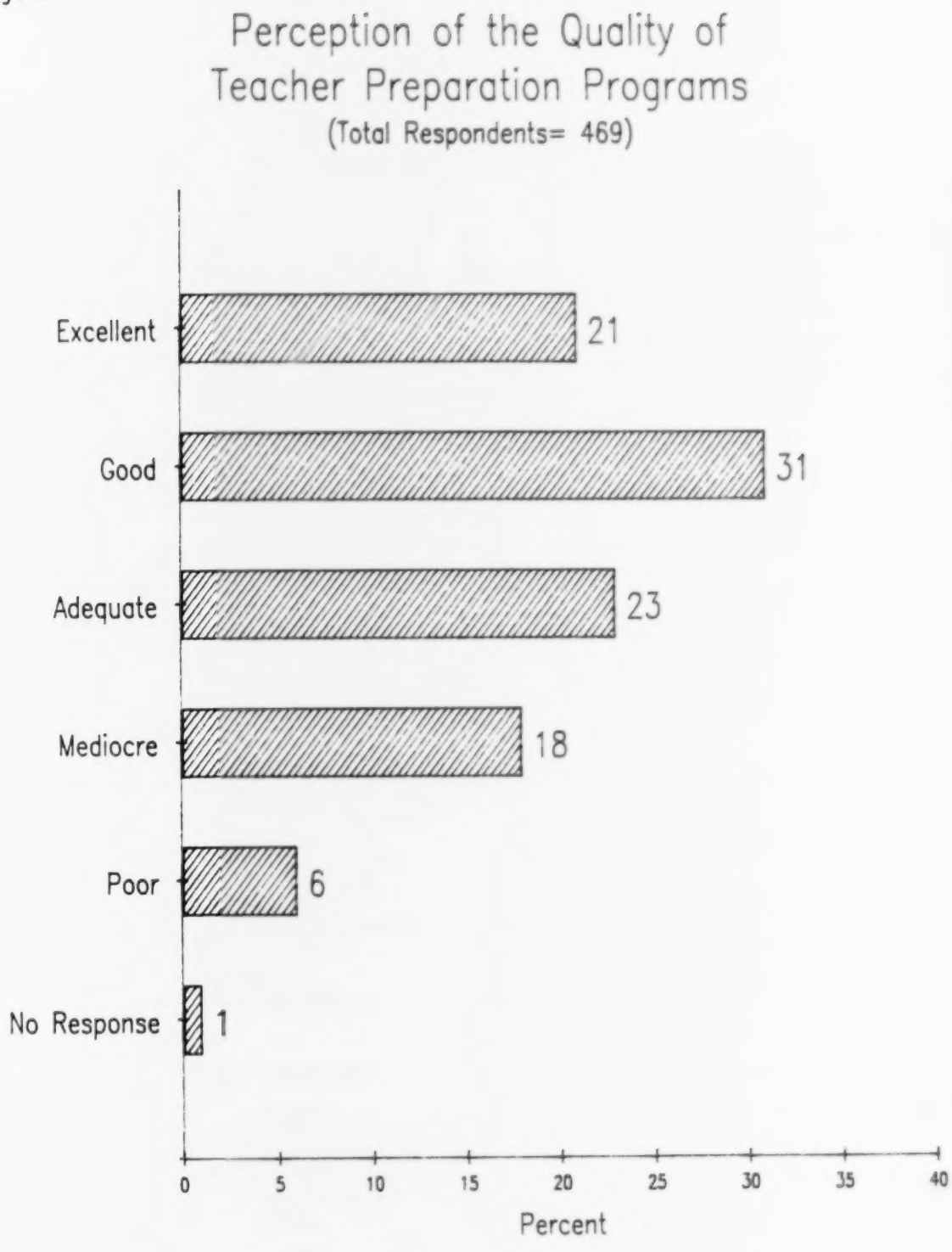

Perception of the Quality of
Teacher Preparation Programs
(Total Respondents= 469)
Excellent
21
Good
31
Adequate
23
Mediocre
18
Poor
6
No Response
1
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
Percent

Table 1

Perceived Quality by Type of Preparation for Certification

Quality	Type of Preparation: B. A. - College of Education	B. A. - not Education	Completed After B. A.
Excellent or good	58%	42%	44%
Adequate	22%	25%	25%
Mediocre or poor	20%	33%	31%
Total percent	100%	100%	100%
Number	(283)	(57)	(111)

Respondents were asked to indicate which social studies endorsements they have. The responses are listed in rank order.

Social Studies Comprehensive major	157	(34%)
History major	152	(32%)
Social Studies Comprehensive minor	69	(15%)
History minor	55	(12%)
Political Science major	49	(10%)
Political Science minor	29	(6%)
Geography minor	25	(5%)
Psychology minor	24	(5%)
Psychology major	16	(3%)
Sociology major	13	(3%)
Sociology minor	9	(2%)
Geography major	7	(2%)
Economics minor	6	(1%)
Economics major	5	(1%)
Anthropology major	3	(1%)
Anthropology minor	3	(1%)

Forty-nine percent (230) of the social studies teachers also hold Nevada endorsements in areas other than social studies. Respondents named the following 38 different endorsements.

English	67
Administration	42
Physical Education	39
Math	18
Spanish	17
Reading	14
Driver's Education	13
Science	11
Vocational Administration	9
Business Education	8
Music	8
Counselor	7
Health	7
Special Education	7
German	7
French	6
Library Science	5
Art K-12	5
Language Arts	5
Biological Sciences	5
Substitute K-12	4
Chemistry	3
Italian	3
Dramatics	2
Ag. Education K-8	2
Speech	2
Media Specialist	2

Real Estate 1
Pupil Personnel K-12 1
Voc. Agricultural 9-12 1
Industrial Arts 1
Substitute K-8 1
Physics. 1
Home Economics 1
English Literature 1
American Literature 1
Computers. 1
Band 1

In response to the question, "Have you ever been certified to teach in another state?", 283 or 60% replied "Yes." These certificates/licenses were held in 41 states, Guam, and the Department of Defense (overseas). They include endorsements to teach in some 32 areas in addition to social studies.

Finally, respondents were asked whether any of the certification or recertification regulations in Nevada had ever been difficult to meet. Twenty-eight percent (129) said "Yes."

Explanations most commonly concerned 1) the five recertification areas required until recently or 2) desired classes not offered at convenient times or locations or not offered at all.

Professional Career

Years of Teaching Experience

Social studies teachers in Nevada are, in the main, an experienced group. Forty percent have 17 or more years of secondary teaching experience; 65% have taught more than 11 years. (See Figure 9.)

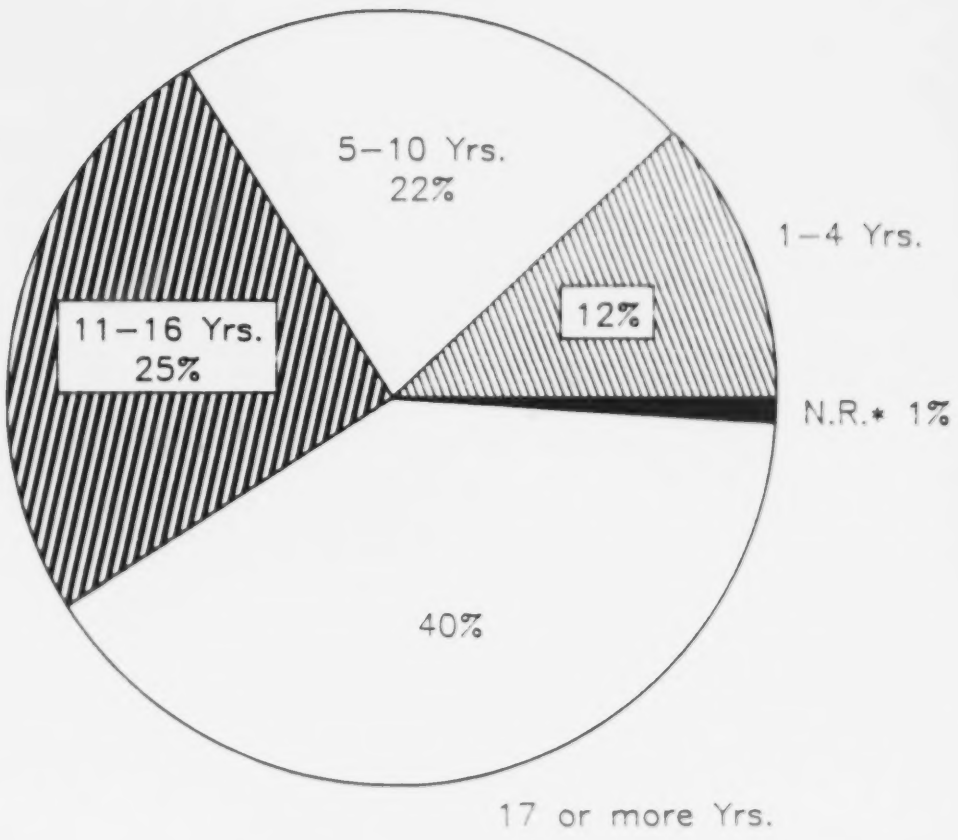
Professional Development

Professional development can be accomplished in a number of different ways. As seen in Figure 10, the social studies teachers most commonly used in-service coursework for this purpose (79%). Next most frequently used were continuing education (56%), university coursework in education (53%) and university coursework in social studies (43%).

Figure 9

Number of Years of Full–Time Teaching Experience

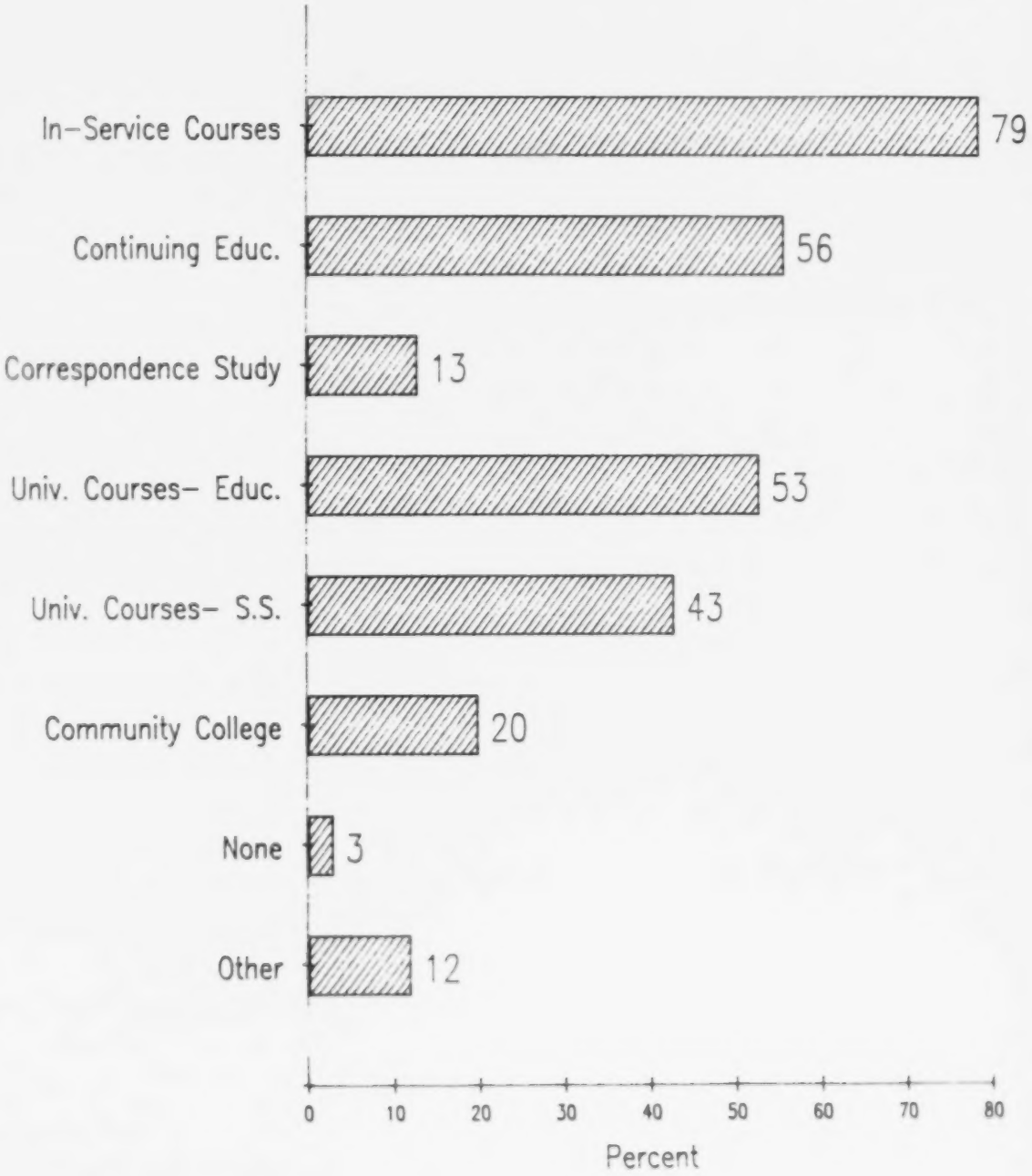
(Respondents= 469)



* N.R.= No Response

Figure 10

Types of Credit for Professional Development (Within the Last Five Years)



Professional Activities

In contrast to professional development, professional activities are generally considered to be voluntary, although a certain amount of pressure may be involved. What is probably most noticeable about Table 2 is the comparatively low percentage of social studies teachers who have ever been involved in any of these activities. Highest involvement was indicated for "department chairperson" (37%) and for "member of a social studies curriculum development/evaluation committee" (37%).

Table 2

Percent Ever Involved In Each Professional Activity

Type of Activity	Percent
Member of a national social studies association	32% (148)
Member of a local, state, or regional social studies association	29% (138)
Elected officer of a social studies association	3% (15)
Member of a social studies curriculum development/ evaluation committee	37% (173)
Member of a social studies textbook selection/ evaluation committee	34% (158)
Instructor for school district in-service course	12% (54)
Master teacher or cooperating teacher for one or more student teachers	33% (154)
Department chairperson	37% (175)
Other	8% (35)

Another way to view these results is to ask how many different professional activities each social studies teacher has ever been involved in. As seen in Figure 11, almost one-fourth of our respondents had never participated in any social studies related professional activities and 19% had engaged in only one such activity. A series of cross-tabulations revealed that a high degree of involvement in professional activities was most closely related to the following: years of teaching experience, a major in social studies, number of social studies classes being taught, and having taught a social studies class during student teaching.

Personal Background Information

Ninety-three percent of the social studies teachers are Caucasian, 4% are Black, 1% are Hispanic, and less than 1% are Native American Indian.

Sixty-five percent (303) of the social studies teachers are male, 35% (165) are female.

The social studies teaching force tends to be older rather than younger. As seen in Figure 12, 56% are over forty years of age and 20% are over fifty.

Figure 11

Number of Professional Activities Ever Engaged In By Social Studies Teachers

(Total Respondents= 469)

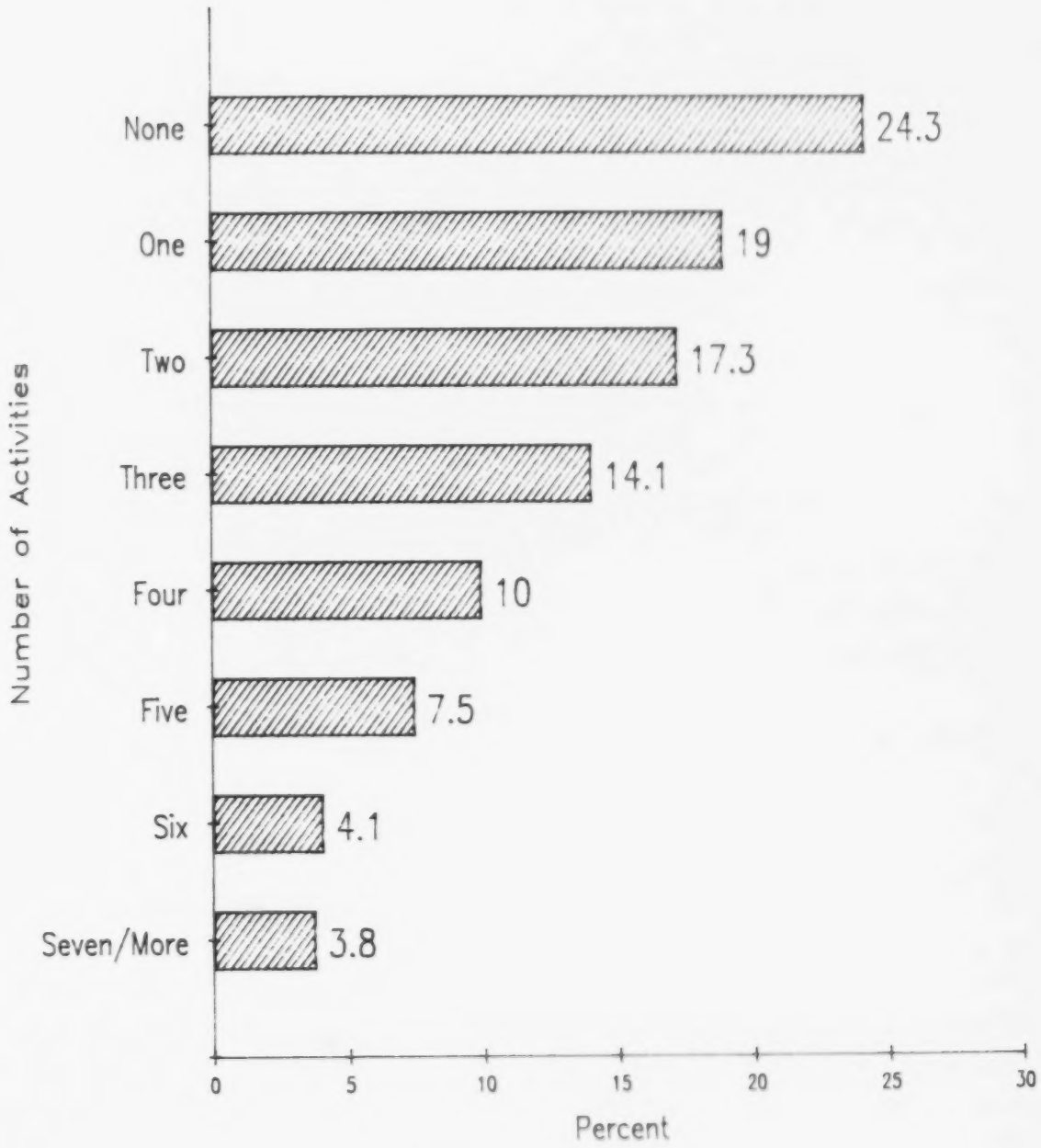
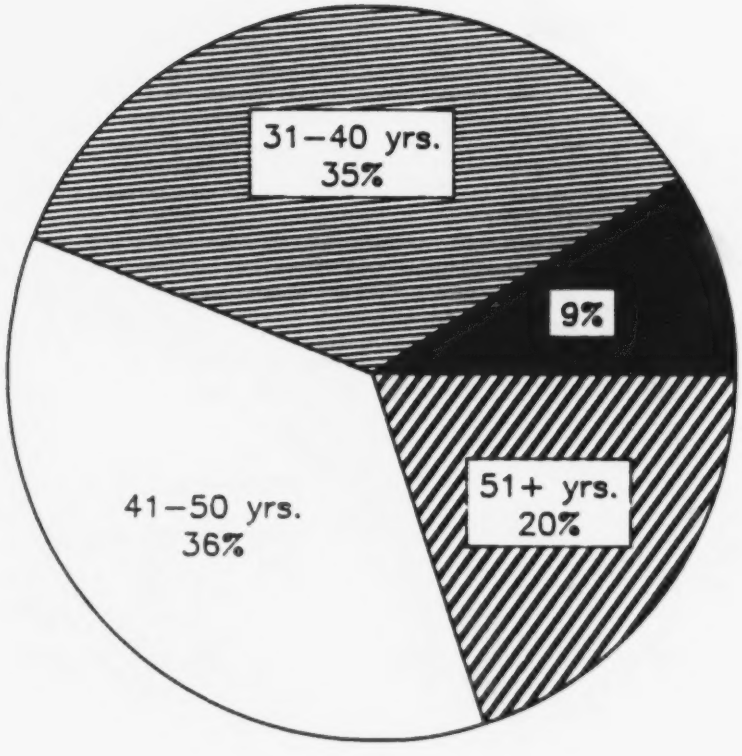


Figure 12

Ages of Social Studies Teachers
(Total Respondents= 469)



A Comparison of Social Studies Teachers in Rural and Urban School Districts

Description

The highest numbers of social studies teachers in both rural and urban districts are located in senior high schools (rural, 45%; urban, 50%). In rural districts more social studies teachers are located in combination junior/senior high schools than is the case in urban districts. In urban districts social studies teachers are more likely to be located in junior high schools than is true in rural districts.

The social studies teaching force in urban districts is older, more experienced, and more likely to be female than is true for rural districts. (See Table 3.)

Teaching Situations

It is more common for social studies teachers in rural districts to be teaching only 1 or 2 social studies classes than is the case in urban districts. Small classes (under 20) occur much more frequently in rural districts, whereas, large classes (over 30) are more common in urban districts. Neither rural district nor urban district social studies teachers have many below average or above average ability level classes. (Table 4.)

Preparation

There is little difference between rural and urban district social studies teachers in terms of where they received their undergraduate training. Over 60% of both groups attended out-of-state schools.

Social studies teachers in urban districts are slightly more likely to have majors in social studies (rural 59%, urban 66%). However, a conspicuous difference between the two groups is that only 30% of the rural teachers hold master's degrees compared to 65% of the urban teachers.

TABLE 3

Description of Social Studies Teachers
in Rural and Urban School Districts

	Rural District		Urban District
	NUMBER	%	%
Total Teachers	469	24	76
Type of School			
Middle	59	18	11
Junior High	119	11	30
Senior High	229	45	50
Jr/Sr High	44	26	4
Other	18	0	5
Teaching Experience			
1 to 4 years	57	15	11
5 to 10 years	103	32	19
11 to 16 years	118	18	27
17 or more years	187	34	42
No response	4	1	1
Age of Teacher			
20 to 30 years old	42	15	7
31 to 40	164	42	33
41 to 50	169	27	39
51 or older	92	16	21
No response	2	0	1
Sex of Teacher			
Male	303	75	62
Female	165	25	38

TABLE 4

Teaching Situations of Social Studies Teachers
in Rural and Urban School Districts

	Rural District		Urban District
	NUMBER	%	%
Total Teachers	469	24	76
Number of Social Studies Classes			
one or two	115	32	22
three or four	107	24	22
five or more	226	41	50
No response	21	3	5
Number of Small (less than 20) Classes			
one or two	96	38	15
three or four	22	10	3
five or more	7	3	1
none	344	49	81
Number of Large (over 30) Classes			
one or two	122	14	30
three or four	54	3	14
five or more	35	0	10
none	258	83	47
Number of Below Average Ability Level Classes			
one or two	83	15	19
three or four	5	0	1
five or more	3	0	1
none	378	85	79
Number of Above Average Ability Level Classes			
one or two	86	14	20
three or four	19	1	5
five or more	4	0	1
none	360	85	74

Type of preparation is similar for the rural and urban social studies teachers. However, the urban teachers appear to be somewhat more positive about their preparation experience; 54% of the urban teachers rate it as "excellent or good" compared to 45% of the rural teachers. (Table 5.)

Professional Activities

It is apparent in Table 6 that social studies teachers in rural and urban districts tend to have been involved in different types of professional activities. Urban teachers are more likely to be members of national, state, or local social studies associations and to be or have been master or cooperating teachers with student teachers. However, rural teachers are more likely to have been members of a social studies curriculum committee, members of a textbook selection committee, or to have been a department chairperson.

TABLE 5

Preparation of Social Studies Teachers
in Rural and Urban School Districts

		Rural District	Urban District
	NUMBER	%	%
Total Teachers	469	24	76
Where graduated			
UNR	106	32	20
UNLV	46	5	11
Other	314	62	68
No response	3	1	1
Major in Social Studies			
Yes	303	59	66
No	162	40	33
No response	4	1	1
Master's Degree			
Yes	267	30	65
No	202	70	35
Type of Preparation			
B.A. - School of Ed.	283	64	59
B.A. - Other	57	9	13
After B.A.	111	23	24
Other	12	3	2
No response	6	2	2
Quality of Preparation			
Excellent	98	20	21
Good	147	25	33
Adequate	108	27	22
Mediocre	83	21	17
Poor	27	6	6
No response	6	1	2

TABLE 6

Professional Activities of Social Studies Teachers
in Rural and Urban School Districts

		Rural District	Urban District
	NUMBER	%	%
Total Teachers	469	24	76
Have ever been a/an:			
- member of a national national social studies association	148	13	37
- member of a local/ state social studies association	138	12	35
- member of a social studies curriculum development/evaluation committee	173	45	35
- member of a textbook selection/evaluation committee	158	46	30
- instructor for a school district in-service course	54	5	13
- master or cooperating teacher	154	14	39
- department chairperson	175	41	36

Summary and Conclusions

Three-fourths of Nevada's social studies teachers are teaching in the urban county districts of Clark, Washoe and Carson City. The remaining one-fourth are distributed in 13 rural county districts.

The number of social studies classes being taught by our respondents varied widely. Teaching only one or two social studies classes was more common in rural districts than in urban districts. Small social studies classes (less than 20) were much more often experienced by rural district teachers (51%) than urban district teachers (19%). Just the opposite was true for large social studies classes. Fifty-one percent of the urban teachers had one or more large classes; only 17% of rural teachers had any large classes. The majority of social studies classes, in both the rural and urban districts, were described as being composed of average level or mixed ability level students rather than above or below ability level students.

One of the most striking findings of the survey was that the 67% of the social studies teachers who were trained out-of-state, received this undergraduate training in 167 different colleges or universities in 40 states. Given such diverse educational backgrounds, variation in the way social studies classes are taught, for example, variation in content stressed and in methods used, would not be unexpected.

Sixty-five percent of Nevada's social studies teachers have one or more majors in social studies. However 26% have only minors in a social studies area, and 9% have completed neither a major nor a minor. This raises the question of whether or to what extent persons teaching social studies, whose major training is in another subject area, regard themselves as social studies teachers, and what effect this may have on the quality of teaching in these classes. Evidence for this concern was provided by some of our respondents who made the following comments:

> "Social studies seems to be a 'fill-in' area for teachers wanted for other specific assignments."
>
> "Social studies is a fill-in for me." (Given as a reason for not being involved in professional social studies activities.)

Other indicators of specific training to be a social studies teacher included: had completed a course in the methods of teaching a particular social studies area, had taught a social studies class as part of the supervised teaching experience, and had taken some graduate courses in social studies. Approximately 70% of the respondents replied "Yes" to each of these questions; 30% said "No."

Fifty-seven percent of the social studies respondents held master's degrees. This was much more characteristic of urban district teachers (65%) than of the rural district teachers (30%). However it is of interest that 73% of these master's degrees were earned in areas other than social studies.

The majority of the social studies teachers (60%) completed their teacher preparation program as part of a bachelor's degree awarded from a college or school of education. Members of this subgroup were also more likely to rate their preparation as "excellent or good" than were those who completed their teacher preparation program while earning a bachelor's degree in a school or college other than education or completed teaching requirements after earning a bachelor's degree.

The two types of endorsements most commonly held by our respondents were: Social Studies Comprehensive Major* (34%) and History Major (32%). Almost one-half of the social studies teachers hold Nevada endorsements in other subject areas in addition to social studies endorsements. Also it was not surprising, given the large number of teachers prepared out-of-state, to discover that 60% of the social studies teachers are or have been licensed to teach in other states.

Relatively low participation in different professional activities such as membership in a social studies association, participation on a committee concerned with social studies curriculum or textbooks, service as a master or cooperating teacher, or as a department chairperson is characteristic of the social studies teaching force in Nevada. Highest participation was indicated for " member of a social studies curriculum committee" (37%) and for "department chairperson" (37%). These results again raise a question about the degree of identification as social

---

*Several of our respondents voiced concern about the social studies comprehensive endorsements. For example, "It is important that a certificate state exactly what classes you can teach. Comprehensive social studies certificates put some teachers into classes they are not prepared to teach. They do not have the educational training to do the job. In these instances, teacher and community are short changed."

studies teachers and what consequences this may have for the quality of teaching. Different types of professional activities tended to be reported by rural social studies teachers as opposed to urban social studies teachers.

The social studies teaching force in Nevada is, in the main, composed of experienced teachers and older teachers. The majority have taught over 11 years and are over 40 years of age. Ninety-three percent are white; only 6% are members of minorities. The majority of the social studies teachers are male. The social studies teachers in the urban school districts are more likely to be experienced, to be older, and to be female, than is true of the group as a whole.

Suggested Recommendations

The results of this study suggest recommendations for the Department, the Nevada State Legislature, and the University of Nevada System.

The diverse educational backgrounds, the range of involvement in teaching social studies classes, the varied teaching situations experienced, and the comparative lack of participation in professional social studies activities, all indicate a need to provide greater leadership and support to the social studies teachers in Nevada. A social studies consultant position in the Department, with appropriate resource money, could provide support to existing social studies associations and encourage the creation of others, for example, in the rural areas. Social studies teachers would be able to come together to discuss their common needs, to become acquainted, to appreciate their different teaching situations, to help each other, and to plan stimulating and worthwhile programs and activities. The goal would be an increased sense of professional identity as social studies teachers strive to help each other improve the quality of social studies teaching in the schools. Included within this goal would be some common understanding regarding what the curriculum should be which would involve discussions at both the district and state levels.

Another thread running throughout the survey, reveals the existence of a significant minority of social studies teachers who are not well prepared for this job. The 35% without a major in a social studies area, the 30% each who have not studied methods of teaching social studies and did not teach a social studies class during student teaching and have had no graduate social studies courses, provide evidence of this fact. The Universities and the Department could work together to provide more in-state training opportunities for these persons.

The Department and the Commission may wish to review the regulations for social studies teachers and consider requiring a major in order to obtain a license. They may also wish to consider how to deal with exceptions to the present regulations, that is, those who are teaching with neither a major nor a minor in social studies.

The Department, the Universities, and the Legislature may also wish to consider creating programs to encourage more minority social studies teachers in Nevada. An argument can be made that this is especially appropriate/needed in the area of social studies.

APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire

(1-3)

Social Studies Teacher Survey

General Instructions: We appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey. Most of the questions may be answered by placing an "X" in the appropriate box, next to the one best answer. Other types of responses (such as multiple or written) will be clearly indicated.

I. CURRENT TEACHING SITUATION

1. In what type of school do you presently teach?

(4)

1 [ ] middle school

2 [ ] junior high school

3 [ ] senior high school

4 [ ] K-8

5 [ ] Combined junior/senior high school

6 [ ] sixth grade center

7 [ ] other; please specify _____

2. Do you teach in a rural or urban school district (only Carson City, Clark and Washoe counties are classified as urban)?

(5)

1 [ ] rural

2 [ ] urban ----

|

V

If urban: Do you teach in a rural school located within an urban district?

(6)

1 [ ] yes

2 [ ] no

3. How would you describe the socio-economic background of most of the students in your school?

(7)

1 [ ] predominantly low

2 [ ] predominantly middle

3 [ ] predominantly high

4 [ ] a mix of different socio-economic levels, no one predominant

5 [ ] don't know, not sure

4. Please write in the following information about each class that you teach (whether social studies or other).

(8-31)

	Name of Subject	Size of Class	Ability Group Level (e.g. Special, Remedial, Basic, Average, General, Mixed, Honor, AP)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

5. Were there any particular experiences or courses in your formal preparation which you feel have helped you to be an effective social studies teacher in your current situation?

(32)

6. Was there anything about your formal preparation which you feel has prevented you from being as effective a social studies teacher as you would like?

(33)

II. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1. **In what year did you graduate from college?**
(34-35)

_____

2. **Where did you graduate from college?**
(36)

1 [] UNR
2 [] UNLV
3 [] Other ----

If other, please specify school and state.

_____ , _____

3. **During your undergraduate program, did you complete a major or minor (or their equivalents) in one of the social studies areas? Mark one.**
(37)

1 [] yes, a major (or its equivalent) in a social studies area
2 [] yes, a minor (or its equivalent) in a social studies area --
3 [] yes, both a major and a minor
4 [] yes, a double major in social studies areas
5 [] no, neither a major nor a minor ----

If you did not major in an area of social studies, what was your major?

_____

4. **Did you earn undergraduate hours in education?**
(38)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no

If yes, how many semester hours in education did did you complete?
(39)

1 [] 18 or fewer
2 [] 19 to 36
3 [] more than 36

5. **Did you teach one or more social studies classes as part of your supervised student teaching?**

(40)

1 [] yes

2 [] no

6. **Have you completed any graduate level coursework in social studies?**

(41)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no |
V

If yes, how many semester hours of graduate work have you earned?

(42)

1 [] 1-3
2 [] 4-9
3 [] 10-15
4 [] 16-24
5 [] 25-36
6 [] Over 36

7. **Have you ever taken a college or university course on methods of teaching one of the social studies areas?**

(43)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no |
V

If yes, was this work on the:

(44)

1 [] undergraduate level
2 [] graduate level
3 [] both undergraduate and graduate

8. **From the following list of social studies areas, check <u>each</u> <u>area</u> in which you have completed at least 3 semester hours (either undergraduate or graduate).**

(45-54)

1 [] Anthropology
2 [] Psychology
3 [] Sociology
4 [] Economics
5 [] Political Science
6 [] Geography
7 [] U.S. History (inc. Nevada History)
8 [] World History (inc. all World Studies e.g. Russian or French History)
9 [] Ethnic Studies
10 [] Other, please specify _____

9. What degrees do you presently hold?
(55-58)

Degree	Area of Concentration
1 [] bachelor's degree	_____
2 [] master's degree	_____
3 [] specialist's degree	_____
4 [] doctoral degree	_____

If you hold a graduate degree(s), was the degree earned in the area of your first choice?
(59)
1 [] yes
2 [] no

If no, please explain.

_____

_____

10. What degrees with what areas of concentration do you plan to complete in the future?
(60-63)

Degree	Area of Concentration
1 [] master's	_____
2 [] specialist's	_____
3 [] doctoral	_____
4 [] none	

11. Which of the following responses best describes your preparation for your first teaching certificate?
(64)

1 [] completed a teacher certification program as part of a bachelor's degree awarded from a college or school of education.

2 [] completed a teacher certification program as part of a bachelor's degree awarded from a college or school <u>other</u> than education.

3 [] completed most or all of the coursework required for certification <u>after</u> I completed my bachelor's degree.

4 [] Other, please specify _____

12. How would you describe the quality of the teacher preparation program you completed?

(65)

1 [] excellent; prepared me well for my first teaching assignment.

2 [] good; for the most part I was ready to begin my first teaching assignment.

3 [] adequate; I received the essentials.

4 [] mediocre; left too much to be learned on the job.

5 [] poor; almost a total waste of time.

Comments (optional)

_____

_____

_____

III. CERTIFICATION STATUS

1. Which of the following Nevada certificates do you presently hold? Check all that apply.

(66-69)

1 [] provisional

2 [] elementary

3 [] secondary

4 [] special*

***NOTE:** "Special" includes administrator, counselor, librarian, school nurse, school psychologist, social worker, staff specialist, and teachers of art, music, driver education, environment, foreign language, English as a second language, library science, industrial arts, physical education, reading and computer science in grades K-12.

2. Which of the following endorsements on your certificate do you presently hold? Check all that apply.

(70-85)

1 [] Anthropology major

2 [] Anthropology minor

3 [] Geography major

4 [] Geography minor

5 [] Psychology major

6 [] Psychology minor

7 [] Economics major

8 [] Economics minor

9 [] Sociology major

10 [] Sociology minor

11 [] Political Science major

12 [] Political Science minor

13 [] History major

14 [] History minor

15 [] Social Studies COMPREHENSIVE major

16 [] Social Studies COMPREHENSIVE minor

3. **Do you hold any other endorsements in the State of Nevada?**

(86)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no |
V

If yes, please list them

_____

_____

_____

4. **Have you ever been certified to teach in another state?**

(87)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no |
V

If yes, please name the other state(s)

_____

_____

5. **Have any of the certification or recertification regulations in the State of Nevada been troublesome for you to meet?**

(88)

1 [] yes ------
2 [] no |
V

If yes, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

IV. PROFESSIONAL CAREER ACTIVITIES

1. How many full-time years of secondary teaching will you have completed at the end of this academic year?
(Include all experience both in Nevada and elsewhere)

(89)

1 [] one
2 [] 2-4
3 [] 5-7
4 [] 8-10
5 [] 11-13
6 [] 14-16
7 [] 17 19
8 [] 20 or more

2. During the last five years, or the number of years you have taught if less than five, what kinds of credit have you completed for professional development? Check all that apply.

(90-97)

1 [] in-service coursework
2 [] continuing education
3 [] correspondence study
4 [] university coursework in education
5 [] university coursework in social studies areas
6 [] community college coursework
7 [] none
8 [] other; describe _____

(98) **PLEASE UNDERLINE THE OPTION ABOVE IN WHICH YOU HAVE TAKEN THE MOST CREDITS**

3. Check all the following professional activities in which you have been involved at any time during your teaching career.

(99-107)

1 [] membership in a national social studies association
2 [] membership in a local, state, or regional social studies association
3 [] elected officer in a social studies association
4 [] member of a social studies curriculum development/evaluation committee
5 [] member of social studies textbook selection/evaluation committee
6 [] instructor for school district in-service course
7 [] master teacher or cooperating teacher for one or more student teachers
8 [] department chairperson
9 [] other, please specify _____

V. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please check those that apply to you.

(108) **1.** [] male
[] female

(109) **2.** 1 [] Caucasian
2 [] Black
3 [] Asian/Pacific Isles
4 [] Hispanic
5 [] Native American Indian
6 [] other, please specify _____

(110) **3.** 1 [] 20 - 25 years of age
2 [] 26 - 30
3 [] 31 - 35
4 [] 36 - 40
5 [] 41 - 45
6 [] 46 - 50
7 [] 51 - 55
8 [] 56 or older

Thank You Very Much

If you would like to make any additional comments, please use the back cover for this purpose.

APPENDIX B

Types of Social Studies Classes Taught

Figure B-1

Percent Social Studies Teachers with Classes of Different Sizes

(Total Respondents= 469)

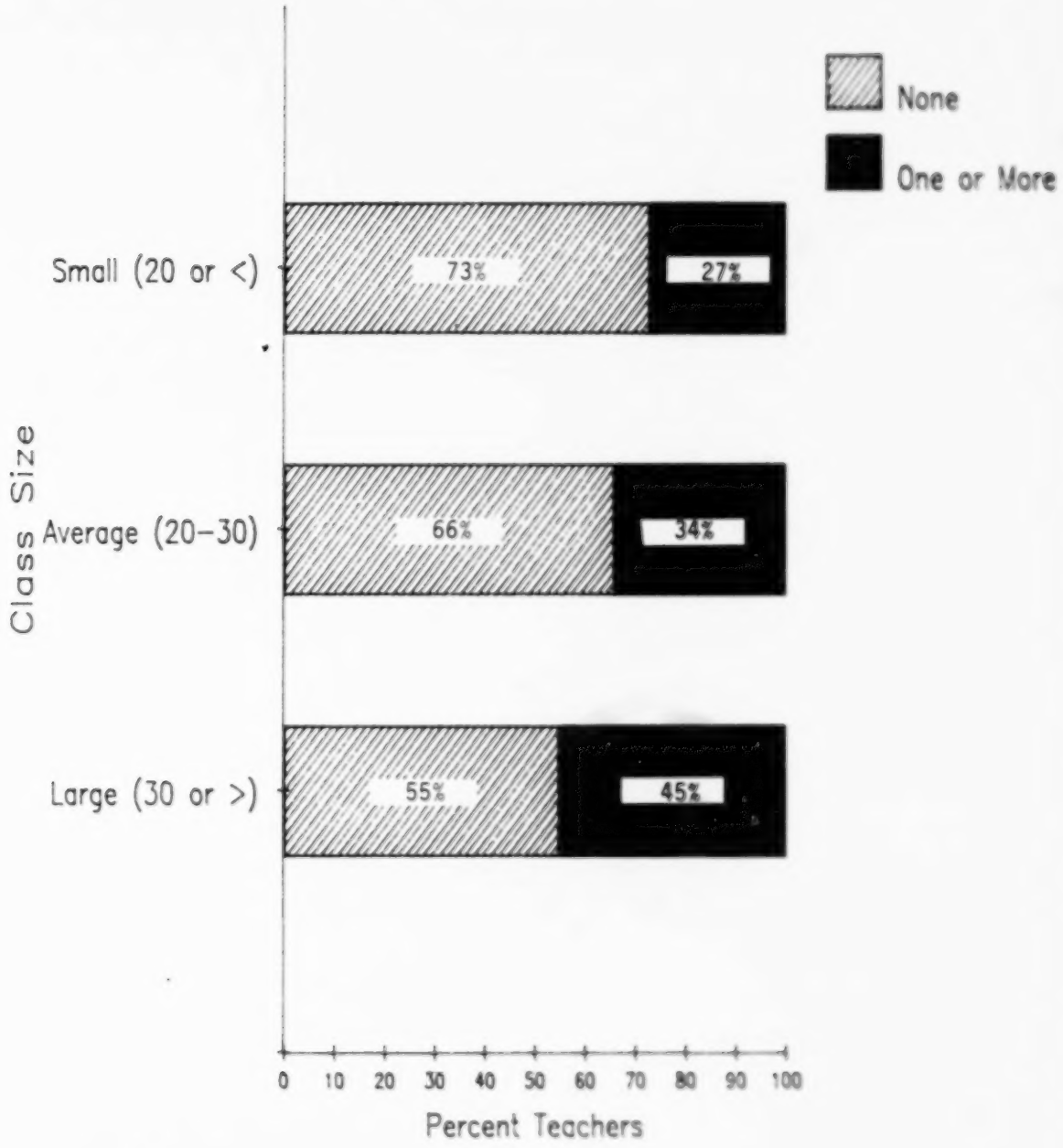


Figure B-2

Percent Social Studies Teachers with Classes of Different Ability Levels

(Total Respondents= 469)